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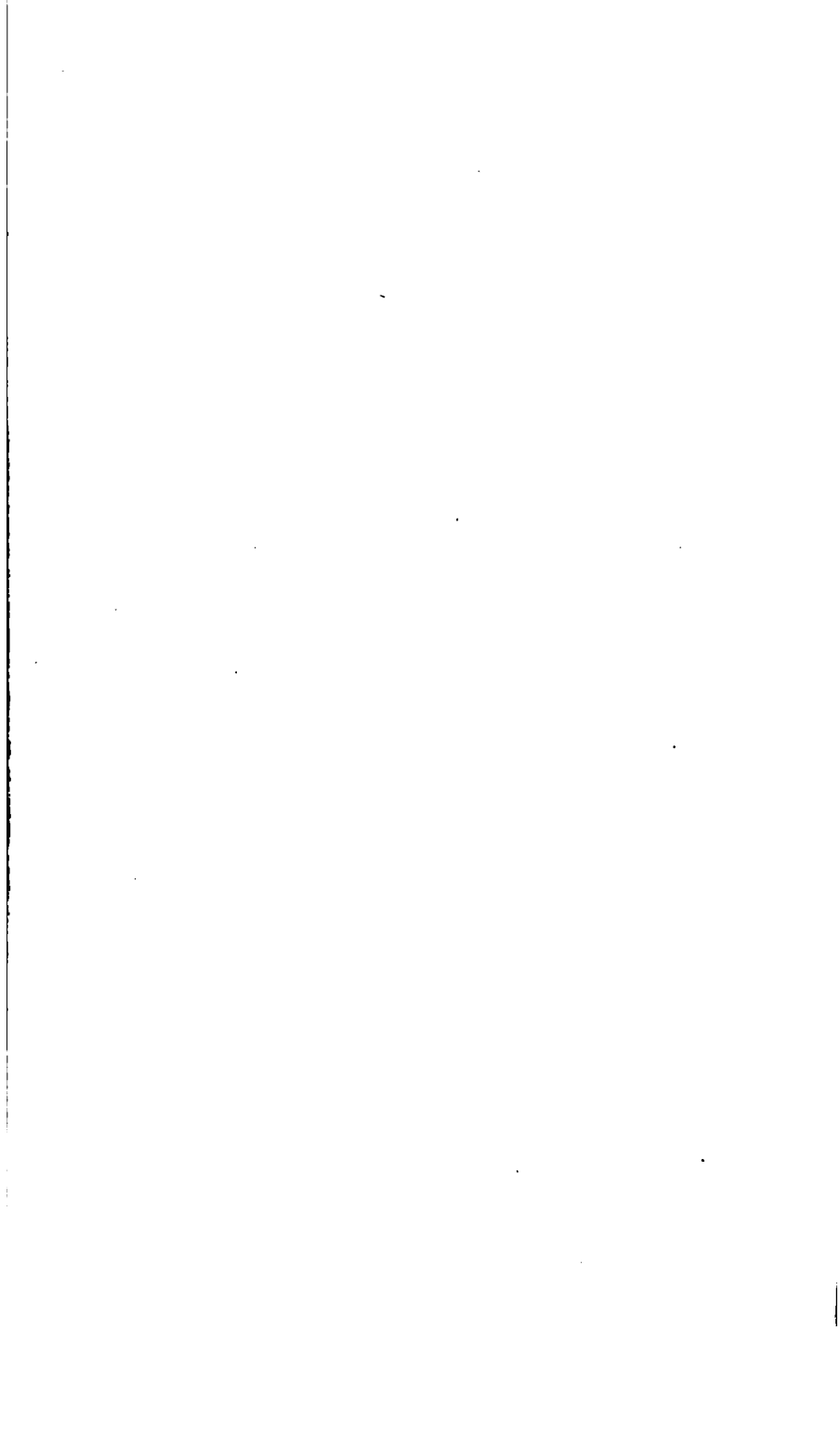
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THE  
RELIGIOUS SYSTEM OF THE PARSIS:

A PAPER

BY

JIVANJI JAMSHEDJI MODI, B.A.

*(Second Edition.)*



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A public lecture was delivered on the subject of this paper at the Town Hall of Bombay on the 12th of January 1885, when Sir James Fergusson, Bart., K.C.M.G., C.I.E., the then Governor of Bombay, kindly presided. On being appointed a Member of the Advisory Council of the Religious Congress which met at Chicago in September 1893, and being asked to write a paper on the Parsi Faith, I rewrote and enlarged the paper in its present form. The first edition was published in 1893.



BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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Asto-dân.

The River Kàrun.

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પુનઃદેહશ.

## THE RELIGIOUS SYSTEM OF THE PARSEES.

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THE greatest good that a Parliament of Religions, like the present, can do is to establish what Professor Max Müller calls "that great golden dawn of truth 'that there is a religion behind all religions.'" The learned professor very rightly says that "Happy is the man who knows that truth in these days of materialism and atheism." If this Parliament of Religions does nothing else but spread the knowledge of this golden truth and thus make a large number of men happy, it will immortalize its name. The object of my paper is to take a little part, in the noble efforts of this great gathering, to spread the knowledge of that golden truth from a Parsee point of view.

Before I proceed, let me tell you, in brief, who the Parsees are. The Parsees of India are the followers of Zoroastrianism or the religion of Zoroaster, a religion which was for centuries both the state religion and the national religion of ancient Persia. As Professor Max Müller says, "There were periods in the history of the world when the worship of Ormuzd threatened to rise triumphant on the ruins of the temples of all other gods. If the battles of Marathon and Salamis had been lost and Greece had succumbed to Persia, the state religion of the empire of Cyrus, which was the worship of Ormuzd, might have become the religion of the

whole civilized world. Persia had absorbed the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires ; the Jews were either in Persian captivity or under Persian sway at home ; the sacred monuments of Egypt had been mutilated by the hands of Persian soldiers. The edicts of the king—the king of kings—were sent to India, to Greece, to Scythia, and to Egypt, and if ‘by the grace of Ahura Mazda’ Darius had crushed the liberty of Greece, the purer faith of Zoroaster might easily have superseded the Olympian fables.”

With the overthrow of the Persian monarchy under its last Sassanian king, Yazdagard, at the battle of Nehâvand in A. D. 642, the religion received a check at the hands of the Arabs, who, with sword in one hand and Koran in the other, made the religion of Islam both the state religion and the national religion of the country. But many of those who adhered to the faith of their fathers quitted their ancient father-land for the hospitable shores of India. The modern Parsees of India are the descendants of those early settlers. As a former Governor of Bombay said, “Their position is unique—a handful of persons among the teeming millions of India, and yet who, not only have preserved their ancient race with the utmost purity, but also their religion absolutely unimpaired by contact with others.” In the words of the Right Reverend Dr. Meurin, the learned Bishop (Vicar Apostolic) of Bombay in 1885, the Parsees are “a people who have chosen to relinquish their venerable

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(1) Sir James Fergusson, Bart., on 12th January 1885, on the occasion of a public lecture delivered by the writer of this paper at the Town Hall, Bombay.

ancestors' homesteads rather than abandon their ancient religion, the founder of which has lived no less than 3,000 years ago—a people who for a thousand years have formed in the midst of the great Hindoo people, not unlike an island in the sea, a quite separate and distinct nation, peculiar and remarkable as for its race, so for its religious and social life and customs." Prof. Max Müller says of the religion of the Parsees : " Though every religion is of real and vital interest in its earliest state only, yet its later development too, with all its misunderstandings, faults, and corruptions, offers many an instructive lesson to the thoughtful student of history. Here is a religion, one of the most ancient of the world, once the state religion of the most powerful empire, driven away from its native soil, and deprived of political influence, without even the prestige of a powerful or enlightened priesthood, and yet professed by a handful of exiles—men of wealth, intelligence, and moral worth in Western India, with an unhesitating fervour such as is seldom to be found in larger religious communities. It is well worth the earnest endeavour of the philosopher and the divine to discover, if possible, the spell by which this apparently effete religion continues to command the attachment of the enlightened Parsees of India and makes them turn a deaf ear to the allurements of the Brahamanic worship and the earnest appeals of Christian missionaries."

It is the system of such a religion that is the subject of my paper. As the natural love and respect which one has for his own religion are sometimes held to colour one's



picture of his religion, I will illustrate my account of the Parsee religion, as much as possible, with the statements of Western scholars of repute who have studied the religion and the literature of the Parsees.

I will treat my subject in two parts. Firstly, I will give a brief description of the religion. Secondly, as desired by Rev. Dr. Barrows in his first report to the President of the World's Congress Auxiliary, I will briefly refer to some of the important practical questions of the present age referred to in that report and examine what the Parsee religion has to say on those questions.

## I.

Zoroastrianism or Parseeism—by whatever name the system may be called—is a monotheistic form of religion. It believes in the existence of one God, whom it knows under the names of Mazda, Ahura and Ahura-Mazda, the last form being one that is most commonly met with in the later writings of the Avesta. That the religious system of Zoroaster is monotheistic is evidenced, among other things, by the fact that Zoroaster rejected from his writing the word “daeva,” a very ancient Aryan word for God, derived from the Aryan root “div,” “to shine.” Most of the western nations which separated from the parent stock took with them this word in one form or another for the name of their God. Thus the Greeks called their God, Deos or Zeus; the Romans, Deus; the Germans, Teus; the Lithunians, Diewas, and so on, The Indian and the Iranian branches had the word

"daeva." But when the early Iranians saw that the belief of the people was tending to polytheism and that the sacred word "daeva," instead of being used for God alone, was being used for many of His created objects, they stamped the word as unfit for the name of God and rejected it altogether from the Avesta.

The first and the greatest truth that dawns upon the mind of a Zoroastrian is that the great and the infinite universe, of which he is an infinitesimally small part, is the work of a powerful hand—the result of a master mind. The first and the greatest conception of that master mind, Ahura-Mazda, is that, as the name implies, He is the Omniscient Lord, and as such He is the ruler of both the material and the immaterial world, the corporeal and the incorporeal world, the visible and the invisible world.

As to the material, corporeal, or visible world, the sublime objects and the grand phenomena of Nature which present themselves to the sight of all men, from intelligent and keen observers to ordinary simple men whose powers of observation are in their crude infancy, bear evidence to His omnipotence, to His all-working and ever-working power. If one were to ask which is the best and the surest evidence, that Zoroastrianism rests upon, for its belief in the existence of God, the reply is that it is the "Evidence from Nature." The harmony, the order, the law, and the system observed in Nature, leads the mind of a Zoroastrian from Nature to Nature's God. One of the best hymns of the Gathas (ch. 44)

is written under that train of reasoning. It says that the harmony and order observed in the grand phenomena of Nature, bear ample evidence to the existence of One as the Architect of the whole Universe. The regular movements of the sun and the stars, the periodical waxing and the waning of the Moon, the regular way in which the earth and the clouds are sustained, the regular flow of water and the gradual growth of vegetation, the regular movements of the winds, and the regular succession of light and darkness, of day and night, with their accompaniments of sleep and wakefulness, all these grand and striking phenomena of Nature point to, and bear ample evidence of, the existence of an Almighty Power who is not only the Creator but the Preserver of this Great Universe, who has not only launched that Universe into existence with a premeditated plan of completeness, but who, with the controlling hand of a father, preserves, by certain fixed laws, harmony and order here, there, and anywhere.

As in the Physical World so in the Moral World. As Ahura-Mazda is the ruler of the Physical World, so He is the ruler of the Spiritual World. He is the most spiritual among the spiritual ones. His distinguished attributes are good mind, righteousness, desirable control, piety, perfection, and immortality. As He is the source of all physical light, so He is the source of all spiritual light, all moral light. He is the Beneficent Spirit from whom emanate all good and all piety. He looks into the hearts of men, and sees how much of the good and of the piety that have emanated from Him

has made its home there, and thus rewards the virtuous and punishes the vicious.

As He has arranged all order and harmony in the Physical World, so He has done in the Moral World. Of course, one sees at times, in the plane of this world, moral disorders and want of harmony ; but then the present state is only a part, and that a very small part, of His scheme of moral government. As petty disorders here and there in the grand system of Nature do not disclose any want of system or harmony in the grand scheme of the Universe, so petty disorders in the moral plane in the present state of life do not disclose any want of method in His moral government. In the Moral World virtue has its own reward, and vice its own punishment. Virtue has all happiness and pleasure in the long run, and vice all misery and grief. From a Zoroastrian point of view the consideration of these facts presents a strong evidence for the existence of a future state of life, for the immortality of the soul. As the ruler of the world, Ahura-Mazda hears the prayers of the ruled. He grants the prayers of those who are pious in thoughts, pious in words, pious in deeds. "He not only rewards the good, but punishes the wicked. All that is created, good or evil, fortune or misfortune, is His work."

We now come to the subject of the philosophy of the Zoroastrian religion.

We have seen that Ahura-Mazda or God is, according to Parsee Scriptures, the Causer of all causes. He is the Creator

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as well as the Destroyer, the Increaser as well as the Decreaser. He gives birth to different creatures, and it is He who brings about their end. How is it, then, that He brings about these two contrary results? In the words of Dr. Haug "Having arrived at the grand idea of the unity and indivisibility of the Supreme Being, he (Zoroaster) undertook to solve the great problem which has engaged the attention of so many wise men of antiquity, and even of modern times, *viz.*, how are the imperfections discoverable in the world, the various kinds of evils, wickedness, and baseness, compatible with the goodness, holiness, and justice of God? This great thinker of remote antiquity solved this difficult question *philosophically* by the supposition of two primeval causes, which, though different, were united, and produced the world of material things, as well as that of the spirit."

These two primeval causes or principles are called in the Avesta the two "Mainyus." This word comes from the ancient Aryan root "man," to "think." It may be properly rendered into English by the word "spirit," meaning "that which can only be conceived by the mind but not felt by the senses." Of these two spirits or primeval causes or principles, one is Creative and the other Destructive. The former is known in the Avesta by the name of "Spenta-mainyush" or the Increasing Spirit, and the latter by that of "Angra-mainyush" or the Decreasing Spirit. These two spirits work under one God, Mazda, who, through the agency, as it were, of the two spirits, is the causer of all causes in the universe, the Creator as well as the Destroyer.

These two spirits work under the Almighty day and night. They create and destroy, and this they have done ever since the world was created.

The very roots of the words Spenta and Angra show the functions of the two spirits. The former comes from the Avesta root Span = Sanscrit Shvi (to increase). The latter comes from the root Ang = Sanscrit Anḡ = Lat. Angere ( to press together, to annoy ).

According to Zoroaster's philosophy, our world is the work of these two hostile principles, Spenta-mainyush, the good principle, and Angro-mainyush, the evil principle, both serving under one God. In the words of that learned orientalist Professor Darmestetter, "All that is good in the world comes from the former; all that is bad in it comes from the latter. The history of the world is the history of their conflict; how Angra-mainyu invaded the world of Ahura-Mazda and marred it and how he shall be expelled from it at last. Man is active in the conflict, his duty in it being laid before him in the law revealed by Ahura-Mazda to Zarathushtra. When the appointed time is come . . . Angro-mainyu and hell will be destroyed, man will rise from the dead, and everlasting happiness will reign over the world."

I will here describe the functions of the two spirits in the words of European scholars. In the words of Dr. Haug, "Spento-mainyush was regarded as the author of all that is bright and shining, of all that is good and useful in nature; while Angra-mainyush called into existence all that is dark

and apparently noxious. Both are as inseparable as day and night, and, though opposed to each other, are indispensable for the preservation of creation. The beneficent spirit appears in the blazing flame; the presence of the hurtful one is marked by the wood converted into charcoal. Spenta-mainyush has created the light of day, and Angra-mainyush the darkness of night; the former awakens men to their duties, the latter lulls them to sleep. Life is produced by Spenta-mainyush, but extinguished by Angra-mainyush, whose hands, by releasing the soul from the fetters of the body, enables her to rise into immortality and everlasting life."

According to Professor Darmestetter, Spenta-mainyush "is all light, truth, goodness and knowledge; Angra-mainyush is all darkness, falsehood, wickedness, and ignorance. Ahura ( *i.e.*, Spenta-mainyush ) dwells in the infinite light, Angra-mainyush dwells in the infinite night. Whatever the good spirit makes, the evil spirit mars." According to the well-known Pahlavi book Bundehesh, this conflict between the good spirit and the evil spirit, will, in the end, end in favour of the former.

These philosophical notions have led some learned men to misunderstand Zoroastrian theology. Some authors entertain an opinion that Zoroaster preached Dualism. But this is a serious misconception. On this point Dr. Haug says: "The opinion, so generally entertained now, that Zarathushtra was preaching a Dualism—that is to say, the idea of two original independent spirits, one good and the

other bad, utterly distinct from each other, and one counter-acting the creation of the other, is owing to a confusion of his philosophy with his theology . . . A separate evil spirit of equal power with Ahura-Mazda, and always opposed to him, is entirely foreign to Zarathushtra's theology."

The reason why the original Zoroastrian notion of the two spirits, the creative and the destructive, is misunderstood as dualism is this. In the Parsee scriptures the names of God are Mazda, Ahura, and Ahura-Mazda, the last word being a compound of the first two. The first two words are common in the earliest writings of the Gâthâ, and the third in the later scriptures. In later times the word Ahura-Mazda, instead of being restricted, like Mazda, to the name of God, began to be used in a wider sense, and was applied to Spenta-mainyush, the Creative or the Good Principle. This being the case, wherever the word Ahura-Mazda was used in opposition to that of Angra-mainyush, later authors took it as the name of God, and not as the name of the Creative Principle, which it really was. Thus the very fact of Ahura-Mazda's name being employed in opposition to that of Angra-mainyush or Ahriman, led to the notion that Zoroastrian scriptures preached dualism.

Dr. West, the late Dr. Haug's coadjutor in some of his works and a well-known Pahlavi scholar, takes another view of this question and rebuts the charge of dualism in the sense in which it is ordinarily understood. This learned orientalist, in the Introduction to his English translation

of the Pahlavi Bundelesh, one of the series of Max Müller's sacred books of the East, says : " The Parsi religion has long been represented by its opponents as a dualism ; and this accusation, made in good faith by Muhammadan writers and echoed more incautiously by Christians, has been advanced so strenuously that it has often been admitted even by Parsees themselves as regards the mediæval form of their faith. But neither party seems to have fairly considered how any religion which admits the personality of an evil spirit, in order to account for the existence of evil, can fail to become a dualism to a certain extent. If, therefore, the term is to be used in controversy, it behoves those who use it to define the limits of objectionable dualism with great precision, so as not to include most of the religions of the world, their own among the number.

" If it be necessary for a dualism that the evil spirit be omnipresent, omniscient, almighty, or eternal, then is the Parsee religion no dualism. The Bundahis distinctly asserts that the evil spirit is not omniscient and almighty ; that his understanding is backward, so that he was not aware of the existence of Aûharmazd, till he arose from the abyss and saw the light ; that he is unobservant and ignorant of the future till it is revealed to him by Aûharmazd ; that his creatures perish at the resurrection, and he himself becomes impotent and will not be. Nowhere is he supposed to be in two places at once, or to know what is occurring elsewhere than in his own presence. So far his powers are considerably

less than those generally assigned by Christians to the devil.' "

"The origin and end of Aharman appear to be left as, uncertain as those of the devil, and altogether the resemblance between these two ideas of the evil spirit is remarkably close ; in fact, almost too close to admit of the possibility of their being ideas of different origin . . . . If, therefore, a belief in Aharman, as the author of evil makes the Parsee religion a dualism, it is difficult to understand why a belief in the devil, as the author of evil, does not make Christianity also a dualism."

We see from this passage that not only is the charge of dualism as levelled against Zoroastrianism, and as ordinarily understood, groundless, but that there is a close resemblance between the ideas of the Devil among the Christians and those of the Ahriman among the Zoroastrians.

Dr. Haug says the same thing in the following words:—"The Zoroastrian idea of the Devil and the infernal kingdom coincides entirely with the Christian doctrine. The Devil is a murderer and father of lies according to both the Bible and the Zend Avesta."

Thus we see that, according to Zoroaster's philosophy, there are two primeval principles that produce our material world. Consequently, though the Almighty is the creator of all, a part of the creation is said to be created by the good principle and a part by the evil principle. Thus, for example, the heavenly bodies, the earth, water, fire, horses, dogs, and such other objects are the creation of the Good

Principle, and serpents, ants, locusts, etc., are the creation of the Evil Principle. In short, those things that conduce to the greatest good of the greatest number of mankind fall under the category of the creations of the Good Principle, and those that lead to the contrary result under that of the creations of the Evil Principle.

This being the case, it is incumbent upon men to do actions that would support the cause of the Good Principle and destroy that of the Evil One. Therefore the cultivation of the soil, the rearing of domestic animals, etc., on the one hand, and the destruction of wild animals and other noxious creatures on the other, are considered meritorious actions by the Parsees.

From a consideration of these points of philosophy Mr. Samuel Lang says: "The doctrines of this 'excellent religion' are extremely simple. The leading idea is that of monotheism, but the one God has far fewer anthropomorphic attributes, and is relegated much further back into the vague and infinite than the God of any other monotheistic religion. Ahura-Mazda, of which the more familiar appellation Ormuzd is an abbreviation, means the 'All-knowing Lord'; he is said sometimes to dwell in the infinite luminous space, and sometimes to be identical with it. He is, in fact, not unlike the inscrutable First Cause, whom we may regard with awe and reverence, with love and hope, but whom we cannot pretend to define or to understand. But the radical difference between Zoroastrianism and other religions is

that it does not conceive of this one God as an omnipotent Creator, who might make the universe as he chose, and therefore was directly responsible for all the evil in it ; but as a Being acting by certain fixed laws, one of which was for reasons totally inscrutable to us, that existence implied polarity, and therefore that there could be no good without corresponding evil . . . . .

It is evident that this simple and sublime religion is one, to which, by whatever name we may call it, the best modern thought is fast approximating. Men of science like Huxley, philosophers like Herbert Spencer, poets like Tennyson, might all subscribe to it ; and even enlightened Christian Divines, like Dr. Temple, are not very far from it when they admit the idea of a Creator behind the atoms and energies, whose original impress, given in the form of laws of nature, was so perfect as to require no secondary interference. Admit that Christ is the best personification of the Spenta-mainyush or Good Principle in the inscrutable Divine polarity of existence, and a man may be at the same time a Christian and a Zoroastrian."

We will now see how these precepts and philosophic principles affect the question of morality. M. Harlez, in the introduction to his French translation of the Avesta, says : " La religion mazdéene se distingue de toutes les autres religions antiques en ce qu'elle a une morale systématisée et fondée sur des principes philosophiques. Et cette morale est certainement la plus pure, la plus saine qui ait été pro-



duite en dehors du judaïsme." We will see how the ethics of the Zoroastrian religion is systematised and founded upon philosophic principles.

As there are two primeval principles under Ahura-Mazda that produce our material world, as said above, so there are two principles inherent in the nature of man which encourage him to do good or tempt him to do evil. One asks him to support the cause of the Good Principle, the other to that of the Evil Principle. The first is known by the name of Vohumana or Beheman, *i.e.*, "good mind." The prefix "vohu" or "beh" is the same word as that of which our English "better" is the comparative. Mana is the same as the word "mainyu" and means mind or spirit. The second is known by the name of Akamana, *i.e.*, bad mind. The prefix "aka" means "bad," and is the same as our English word "ache" in "headache."

Now these two principles inherent in man, *viz.*, Vohumana and Akamana (good mind and evil mind), exert their influence upon a man's *manashni*, *gavashni* and *kunashni*, *i.e.*, upon a man's thoughts, words and deeds. When the influence of the former, *i.e.*, the good mind, predominates, our thoughts, words, and deeds result in *humata* (good thoughts), *hukhta* (good words), and *hvarshata* (good deeds); but when that of the latter, *i.e.*, the evil mind, predominates, they result in *dushmata* (evil thoughts), *duzukhta* (evil words) and *duzvarshata* (evil deeds). The prefix "hu" in the first set of words corresponds to the Greek "eu" as in eulogium,

aphony, and the prefix "dush" in the second set, to the Latin "dis," as in dislike, disapprove.

Now the 5th chapter of the Vendidad gives, as it were, a short definition of what is morality or piety. There, first of all, the writer says that "*Yaodáo mashiydi aipi zánthem-vahishtá*," i. e., as Dr. Spiegel puts it, "Purity is the best thing for man after birth." This you may say is the motto of the Zoroastrian religion. Therefore M. Harlez very properly says that, according to Zoroastrian scriptures, the "notion of the word virtue sums itself up in that of the '*Asha*.'" This word is the same as the Sanscrit "*rita*," which word corresponds to our English "right." It means therefore righteousness, piety, or purity. Then the writer proceeds to give a short definition of piety. It says that "The preservation of (*humata, hukhta and hvarshta*, i. e.,) good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, is piety." In these three pithy words, "*humata, hukhta, and hvarshta*," is summed up, so to say, the whole of the moral philosophy of the Zoroastrian scriptures. It says that, if you want to lead a pious and moral life and thus to show a clean bill of spiritual health to the angel Meher Dâver, who watches the gates of heaven at the Chinvat Bridge, practise these three: Think of nothing but the truth, speak nothing but the truth, and do nothing but what is proper. In short, what Zoroastrian moral philosophy teaches is this, that your good thoughts, good words, and good deeds alone will be your intercessors. Nothing more will be wanted.

They alone will serve you as a safe pilot to the harbour of heaven, as a safe guide to the gates of paradise. The late Dr. Haug rightly observed that "The moral philosophy of Zoroaster was moving in the triad of 'thought, word, and deed.' " These three words form, as it were, the pivot upon which the moral structure of Zoroastrianism turns. It is the groundwork upon which the whole edifice of Zoroastrian morality rests.

The following dialogue in the Pahlavî Pandnâme of Buzurgche-Meher shows in a succinct form what weight is attached to these three pithy words in the moral code of the Zoroastrians :—

Question.—Who is the most fortunate man in the world ?

Answer.—He who is the most innocent.

Question.—Who is the most innocent man in the world ?

Answer.—He who walks in the path of God and shuns that of the devil.

Question.—Which is the path of God, and which that of the devil ?

Answer.—Virtue is the path of God, and vice that of the devil.

Question.—What constitutes virtue, and what vice ?

Answer.—*Humata, hukhta, and hvarshata, i.e.,* good thoughts, good words, and good deeds constitute virtue, and *dushmata, duzukhta* and *duzvarshata, i.e.,* evil thoughts, evil words, and evil deeds constitute vice.

Question.—What constitute *humata, hukhta, and hvarshata, i.e.,* good thoughts, good words, and good deeds; and *dushmata, duzukhta, and duzvarshata, i.e.,* evil thoughts, evil words, and evil deeds?

Answer.—Honesty, charity, and truthfulness constitute the former; and dishonesty, want of charity, and falsehood constitute the latter.

From this dialogue it will be seen that a man who acquires *humata, hukhta, and hvarshata, i.e.,* good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, and thereby practises honesty, charity, and truthfulness, is considered to walk in the path of God and therefore to be the most innocent and fortunate man.

Herodotus also refers to the third cardinal virtue of truthfulness mentioned above. He says that to speak the truth was one of the three things taught to a Zoroastrian of his time from his very childhood.

This brings us to the question of the destiny of the soul after death. Zoroastrianism believes in the immortality of the soul. The Avesta writings of Hâdokht Nushk and the

19th chapter of the Vendidad and the Pahlavi books of Minokherad and Virâf-nâmesh treat of the fate of the soul after death. The last mentioned book contains an account of the journey of Ardâi-Virâf through the heavenly regions. This account corresponds to that of the ascension of the prophet Isaiah. Its notions about Heaven and Hell correspond to some extent to the Christian notions about them. According to Dr. Haug, its description of Hell and of some of the punishments suffered by the wicked there, bears a striking resemblance to that in the Inferno of the Italian poet Dante. <sup>(1)</sup>

Thus Zoroastrianism believes in the immortality of the soul. A plant called the *Hom-i-saphîd* or white Homa, a name corresponding to the Indian Soma of the Hindus, is held to be the emblem of the immortality of the soul. According to Dr. Windischmann and Professor Max Müller, this plant reminds us of the "Tree of Life" in the garden of Eden. As in the Christian scriptures the way to the Tree of Life is strictly guarded by the Cherubim, so in the Zoroastrian scriptures the *Hom-i-saphîd*, or the plant which is the emblem of immortality, is guarded by innumerable Fravashis—that is, guardian spirits. The number of these guardian spirits, as given in various books, is 99,999.

A good deal of importance is attached in the Avesta and in the later Pahlavi writings to this question of the immortality

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(1) Vide my paper before the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society on "The Divine Comedy of Dante and the Virâf-nâmesh of Ardâi-Virâf."

of the soul, because a belief in this dogma is essential to the structure of moral principles. The whole edifice of our moral nature rests upon its ground work.

Dr. Geiger says on this point: "Nowhere, I think, does the belief in the future life after death stand out more prominently, nowhere are the ideas respecting it expressed more decidedly and carried out in all their details more fully than among the Avesta people. Here the doctrine of immortality and of compensating justice in the next world forms a fundamental dogma of the whole system. Without it the Zoroastrian religion is in fact unintelligible" (1).

Again, Zoroastrianism believes in Heaven and Hell. Heaven is called *Vahishta-ahu* in the Avesta books. It literally means the "best life." This word *Vahishta* has passed into Persian, as "*Behesht*," which is the superlative form of "*veh*," meaning "good," and it corresponds exactly with our English word "best." Hell is known by the name of "*Achishta-ahu*." Heaven is represented as a place of radiance, splendour, and glory, and Hell as that of gloom, darkness, and stench.

Between heaven and this world, there is supposed to be a bridge, named "*chinvat*." This word—from the Aryan root "*chi*," meaning to *pick up*, to *collect*,—means the place where a man's soul has to present a collective account of the actions done in the past life (2).

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(1) Dastur Darab Peshotan's Translation, vol. I, p. 98.

(2) The "*Chinvat*" bridge of the Parsees reminds one of the "*Sirat*" of the Arabs, the "*Wogho*" of the Chinese, and the "*Gioell*" and "*Bifrost*" of the Scandinavians.

According to the Parsee scriptures, for three days after a man's death, his soul remains within the limits of this world under the guidance of the angel Srosh. If the deceased be a pious man or a man who led a virtuous life, his soul utter the words "*Ushtâ-ahmâi yahmâi ushtâ-kahmâichit.*" i.e., "Well is he by whom that which is his benefit becomes the benefit of any one else." If he be a wicked man or one who led an evil life, his soul utters these plaintive words: "*Kam nemoi zâm? Kuthrâ nemo ayeni?*" i.e., "To which land shall I turn? Whither shall I go?"

On the dawn of the third night the departed souls appear at the "Chinvat Bridge." This bridge is (1) guarded by the angel Meher Dâver, i.e., Meher the Judge. He presides there as a judge assisted by the angels Rashné and Astâd, the former representing Justice and the latter Truth. At this bridge, and before this angel Meher, the soul of every man has to give an account of its doing in the past life. Meher Dâver, the judge, weighs a man's actions by a scale-pan. If a man's good actions outweigh his evil ones, even by a small particle, he is allowed to pass from the bridge to the other end to heaven. If his evil actions outweigh his good ones, even by a small weight, he is not allowed to pass over the bridge, but is hurled down into the deep abyss of hell. If his meritorious and evil deeds counterbalance each other, he is sent to a place known as "Hamast-gehan," corresponding to the Christian "Purga-

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(1) Cf. My paper on "Mithra, the Yazata of the Zoroastrians and Michael, the saint of the Christians."

tory" and the Mahomedan "Aeraf." His meritorious deeds done in the past life would prevent him from going to hell and his evil actions would not let him go to heaven.

Again Zoroastrian books say that the meritoriousness of good deeds and the sin of evil ones, increase with the growth of time. As capital increases with interest, so good and bad actions done by a man in his life increase, as it were, with interest in their effects. Thus a meritorious deed done in young age is more effective than that very deed done in advanced age. For example, let that meritorious deed be valued in money. Let two friends, A and B, at the age of twenty-five, propose doing an act of charity, *viz.*, a donation of £1,000 to a charitable institution. A immediately gives the amount, and B postpones the act for some time and does it at the age of fifty. Calculating at the rate of four per cent., A's gift of £1,000 at the age of twenty-five is worth twice that of B at the age of fifty *i.e.*, twenty-five years later. Thus, the Dâdistân-i-Dini recommends man to follow the path of virtue from his very young age. A virtuous act performed by a young man is more meritorious than the same act performed by an old man. A man must begin practising virtue from his very young age. As in the case of good deeds and their meritoriousness, so in the case of evil actions and their sins. The burden of the sin of an evil action increases, as it were, with interest. A young man doing an evil act has time and opportunities at his disposal to wash off, as it were, the effect



of that act, either by repentance or by good deeds in return. A young man has a long time to repent of his evil deeds and to do good deeds that could counteract the effect of his evil deeds. If he does not take advantage of these opportunities, the burden of those evil deeds increases with time.

Having given a brief outline of the religious system of the Parsees, we will here say a few words about the Parsee places of worship and about the Parsee prayers. As a good deal of ignorance seems to prevail among non-Zoroastrians, as to the reverence paid to fire by the Parsees, it will not be out of place here, to say something on the subject of the so-called fire-worship of the Parsees. The Parsee places of worship are known as Fire-temples. The very name Fire temple would strike a non-Zoroastrian as an unusual form of worship.

We will not enter here into the history of the so-called fire-worship, nor enter into the different grounds—religious, moral and scientific—which actuate and even justify a Parsee in offering his reverence—which, it must be remembered, is something different from worship—to fire. Suffice it to say that the Parsees do not worship fire as God. They merely regard fire as an emblem of refulgence, glory, and light, as the most perfect symbol of God, and as the best and noblest representative of His divinity. “In the eyes of a Parsee his (fire’s) brightness, activity, purity, and incorruptibility bear the most perfect resemblance to the nature and perfection of the Deity.” A Parsee looks upon fire “as the most perfect symbol of the Deity on account of its

purity, brightness, activity, subtilty, purity, and incorruptibility." As Reverend Father Menrin<sup>1</sup> says, "Zoroaster restored, not only the unity of God, but also the most ancient and characteristic Aryan form of Divine service, the worship of fire, as the most suitable representative of God, corresponding to their high idea of God as Eternal Light . . . A pure and undefiled flame is certainly the most sublime natural representation of Him, who is in Himself, Eternal Light."

Further on, the same learned Bishop says: "It must, therefore, not surprise us to find a great similarity between these noble ancient Aryan ideas and names of God and those which the Mosaic religion exhibits in its sacred text . . . The Jewish religion was only a preparation and prefiguration of the Christian. If, then, we find shining flames and burning fires as emblems of God's majesty and presence used in the most important and essential circumstances of the Jewish religion, in the vocation of Moses, the deliverance of the Israelites from the Egyptian bondage, their guidance through the desert, the proclamation of the ten commandments, the ark of the covenant, the first sacrifice, the perpetual occupation of the altar, and the predictions of the future Messiah and of His Church, I believe we have a full right to expect the same emblems to be used also for the same purpose in the Christian Church. And so it is in fact . . . A glance at the ritual of the Church shows then, that the very same position which our ancient Aryan

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(1) Christ and Zoroaster,

ancestors, following the light of reason, assigned to fire and light in their Divine Worship in order to represent God's Divine Majesty and His Presence among His worshippers, is likewise, and largely, given to the same convenient and delightful creature as a symbol of God's sublime splendour and living presence among his beloved children." A little further on, writing about the similarity between the Parsee fire-temple and the Christian sanctuary, the Bishop says: "On this landing let us rest for a while. We have before us the sanctuary of the Parsee fire-temple and the sanctuary of the Christian Church. In both we see a perpetual flame indicating the presence of God: there the omnipotence of God the Creator, here the sacramental presence of God the Redeemer. I am unable to express in words the deep and vehement feelings which move my heart when I kneel in the sanctuary of my chapel and think of the Parsee fire-temple a few yards off, in which a fire is ever burning like the flame in our sanctuary lamp. Here is one of the similarities partly said to exist between the Parsee and Christian religions."

Again, one must remember that it is the several symbolic ceremonies that add to the reverence entertained by a Parsee for the fire burning in his fire-temple. <sup>(1)</sup> "A new element of purity is added to the fire burning in the fire-temple of the Parsees by the religious ceremonies accompanied with prayers that are performed over it, before it is

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(1) "History of the Parsees," by Mr. Dossabhoj Framjee, vol. II, p. 212.

installed in its place on a vase on an exalted stand in a chamber set apart.

The sacred fire burning there is not the ordinary fire burning in our hearths. It has undergone several ceremonies, and it is these ceremonies, full of meaning, that render the fire more sacred in the eyes of a Parsee. We will briefly recount the process here. In establishing a fire-temple, fires from various places of manufacture are brought and kept in different vases. Great efforts are also made to obtain fire caused by lightning. Over one of these fires a perforated metallic flat tray with a handle attached is held. On this tray are placed small chips and dust of fragrant sandalwood. These chips and dust are ignited by the heat of the fire below, care being taken that the perforated tray does not touch the fire. Thus a new fire is created out of the first fire. Then from this new fire another one is created by the same process. From this new fire another is again produced, and so on, until the process is repeated nine times. The fire thus prepared after the ninth process is considered pure. The fires brought from other places of manufacture are treated in a similar manner. These purified fires are all collected together upon a large vase, which is then put in its proper place in a separate chamber.

Now what does a fire so prepared signify to a Parsee? He thinks to himself: 'When this fire on this vase before me, though pure in itself, though the noblest of the creations of God, and though the best symbol of the Divinity, had to

undergo certain processes of purification, had to draw out, as it were, its essence—nay, its quintessence—of purity, to enable itself to be worthy of occupying this exalted position, how much more necessary, more essential, and more important it is for me—a poor mortal who is liable to commit sins and crimes, and who comes into contact with hundreds of evils, both physical and mental—to undergo the process of purity and piety, by making my ‘*manashni*,’ ‘*gavashni*,’ and ‘*kunashni*’ (thoughts, words, and actions) pass as it were through a sieve of piety and purity, virtue and morality, and to separate by that means my ‘*humata*,’ ‘*hukhta*’ and ‘*hvarshu*’ (good thoughts, good words, and good actions) from ‘*dushmata*,’ ‘*duzukhta*’ and ‘*duzvarshu*’ (bad thoughts, bad words, and bad actions), so that I may, in my turn, be enabled to acquire an exalted position in the next world.’

Again, the fires put together as above are collected from the houses of men of different grades in society. This reminds a Parsee that, as all these fires from the houses of men of different grades, have by the process of purification, equally acquired the exalted place in the vase, so before God, all men—no matter to what grades of society they belong—are equal, provided they pass through the process of purification, *i. e.*, provided they preserve purity of thoughts, purity of words, and purity of deeds.

Again, when a Parsee goes before the sacred fire, which is kept all day and night burning in the fire-temple, the

officiating priest presents before him the ashes of a part of the consumed fire. The Parsee applies it to his forehead just as a Christian applies the consecrated water in his church and thinks to himself: 'Dust to dust. The fire, all brilliant, shining, and resplendent, has spread the fragrance of the sweet-smelling sandal and frankincense round about, but is at last reduced to dust. So it is destined for me. After all I am to be reduced to dust and have to depart from this transient life. Let me do my best to spread, like this fire, before my death, the fragrance of charity and good deeds and lead the light of righteousness and knowledge before others.'

In short, the sacred fire burning in a fire-temple serves as a perpetual monitor to a Parsee standing before it, to preserve piety, purity, humility and brotherhood.

Now, though a Parsee's reverence for fire, as the emblem of God's refulgence, glory, and light, as the visible form of all heat and light in the Universe, in fact as the visible form of all energy, and as a perpetual monitor, encouraging ennobling thoughts of virtue, has necessitated the erection of fire-temples as places of worship, he is not restricted to any particular place for his prayers. He need not wait for a priest or a place to say his prayers.

Nature in all its grandeur is his temple of worship. The glorious Sun and the resplendent Moon, the mountains towering high into the heavens and the rivers fertilizing the soil, the extensive seas that disappear, as it were, into

the infinity of space, and the high vault of heaven, all these grand objects and phenomena of Nature draw forth from his soul, admiration and praise for the Great Architect, who is their author.

As we said above, evidence from Nature is the surest evidence that leads a Parsee to the belief in the existence of the Deity. From Nature he is led to Nature's God. From this point of view, then, he is not restricted to any particular place for the recital of his prayers. For a visitor to Bombay, which is the head-quarters of the Parsees, it is therefore not unusual to see a number of Parsees saying their prayers, morning and evening, in the open space turning their faces to the rising or the setting sun, before the glowing moon or the foaming sea. Turning to these grand objects, the best and sublimest of His creations, they address their prayers to the Almighty. Mr. Andrew Carnegie, an intelligent American traveller, seems to have entered into the very spirit of a Parsee's thoughts about prayers, when he gives the following description about the above-mentioned Parsee form of worship as witnessed by him at Bombay :—

“This evening we were surprised to see, as we strolled along the beach, more Parsees than ever before, and more Parsee ladies richly dressed, all wending their way towards the sea. It was the first of the new moon, a period sacred to these worshippers of the elements; and here on the shore of the ocean, as the Sun was sinking in the sea and the

slender silver thread of the crescent moon was faintly shining on the horizon, they congregated to perform their religious rites.

"Fire was there in its grandest form, the setting sun, and water in the vast expanse of the Indian Ocean outstretched before them. The earth was under their feet and wafted across the sea, the air came laden with the perfumes of 'Araby the blest.' Surely no time or place could be more fitly chosen than this for lifting up the soul to the realms beyond sense. I could not but participate with these worshippers in what was so grandly beautiful. There was no music save the solemn moan of the waves as they broke into foam on the beach. But where shall we find so mighty an organ or so grand an anthem?"

"How inexpressibly sublime the scene appeared to me, and how insignificant and unworthy of the unknown seemed even our cathedrals 'made with human hands' when compared with this looking up through nature unto nature's God! I stood and drank in the serene happiness which seemed to fill the air. I have seen many modes and forms of worship—some disgusting, others saddening, a few elevating when the organ pealed forth its tones, but all poor in comparison with this. Nor do I ever expect in all my life to witness a religious ceremony which will so powerfully affect me as that of the Parsees on the beach of Bombay."

Mr. Samuel Lang, (1) the author of that very excellent

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(1) "A Modern Zoroastrian," by Samuel Lang, p. 220.



work "A Modern Zoroastrian," who quotes this long passage of Mr. Carnegie, adds: "I say Amen with all my heart to Mr. Carnegie. Here is an ideal religious ceremony combining all that is most true, most touching, and most sublime, in the attitude of man towards the Great Unknown . . . . To the Zoroastrian, prayer assumes the form of a recognition of all that is pure, sublime, and beautiful in the surrounding universe. He can never want opportunities of paying homage to the Good Spirit and of looking into the abyss of the unknown with reverence and wonder. The light of setting suns, the dome of loving blue, the clouds in the might of the tempest or resting still as brooding doves, the mountains, the ocean lashed by storm . . . . these are a Zoroastrian's prayers." . . . In this respect, however, what I have called the Zoroastrian theory of religion affords great advantages. It connects religion directly with all that is good and beautiful, not only in the higher realms of speculation and of emotion, but in the ordinary affairs of daily life. To feel the truth of what is true, the beauty of what is beautiful, is of itself a silent prayer or act of worship to the Spirit of Light; to make an honest, earnest effort to attain this feeling, is an offering or act of homage. Cleanliness of mind and body, order and propriety in conduct, civility in intercourse, and all the homely virtues of everyday life, thus require a higher significance, and any wilful and persistent disregard of them becomes an act of mutiny against the Power whom we have elected to serve."

Herodotus alludes to this form (*viz.*, elevation of one's thoughts from Nature to Nature's God) of a Parsee's worship when he says of the ancient Persians, the ancestors of the modern Parsees, that they went to the tops of mountains and here said their prayers without any altar, idol, or temple (Bk. I., ch. 131). Byron has this reference in mind when he sings in his *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (C. III, 91) the following stanza, placed by Mr. S. Lang at the head of the chapter on a Zoroastrian's Form of Worship :—

“ Not vainly did the early Persian make  
 “ His altar the high places and the peak  
 “ Of earth-o’ergazing mountains, and thus take  
 “ A fit and unwall’d temple, where to seek  
 “ The spirit, in whose honour shrines are weak,  
 “ Uprear’d of human hands. Come, and compare  
 “ Columns and idol-dwellings, Goth or Greek,  
 “ With nature’s realms of worship, earth and air,  
 “ Nor fix on fond abode to circumscribe thy prayer !”

Having spoken at some length about the place of prayers, we will say here something about the prayers themselves. All Parsee prayers begin with an assurance to do acts that would please the Almighty God. The assurance is followed by an expression of regret for past evil thoughts, words or deeds if any. Man is liable to err, and so, if during the interval any errors of commission or omission are committed, a Parsee in the beginning of his prayers repents for those errors. He says : “ O, Omniscient Lord ! I repent of all my

sins. I repent of all evil thoughts that I may have entertained in my mind, of all the evil words that I may have spoken, of all the evil actions that I may have committed. O, Omniscient Lord ! I repent of all the faults that may have originated with me whether they refer to thoughts, words, or deeds, whether they appertain to my body or soul, whether they be in connection with the material world or spiritual." About the catholicity of Parsee prayers we will speak later on in the second part of the paper.

## II.

Having given a brief outline of the religious system of the Parsees, their places of worship and forms of prayer, we will now proceed to consider how far the precepts of that religion are applied to some of the practical questions of life. In the first report of the Chairman of the General Committee on Religious Congresses to the President of the World's Congress Auxiliary, one of the objects of the World's Parliament of Religions is said to be "To discover from competent men what light religion has to throw on the great problems of the present age, especially the important questions connected with Temperance, Labour, Education, Wealth, and Poverty, and to secure from leading scholars representing the Brahman, Buddhist, Confucian, Parsee, Mohammedan, Jewish and other faiths, and from representatives of the various Churches of Christendom, full and accurate statements of the spiritual and other effects of the religions which they hold, upon the Literature, Art, Commerce,

Government, Domestic and Social Life of the peoples among whom these faiths have prevailed." We will here consider these questions from a Parsee point of view.

We will first speak of education. To educate their children is a spiritual duty of Zoroastrian parents. Education is necessary not only for the material good of the children and the parents, but also for their spiritual good. It was this spirit of the Zoroastrian religion that had coloured the education of the early Zoroastrians, of which Professor Rapp says: "The most remarkable and the most beautiful form in which the moral spirit of the Persian people realised itself in life is the well-known Persian education. It indeed, at an early age, implanted in the souls of young Persians the sentiments which should always guide them in all their dealings and which prepared and hardened their bodies in order that as capable citizens they might thereby be able at some future time to serve their native country with worthy deeds." (1) According to the Parsee books, the parents participate in the meritoriousness of the good act performed by their children as the result of the good education imparted to them. On the other hand, if the parents neglect the education of their children and if, as the result of this neglect, they do wrongful acts or evil deeds, the parents have a spiritual responsibility for such acts. In proportion to the malignity or evilness of these acts the parents are responsible to God for their neglect of the education of their children.

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(1) Mr. K. R. Cama's translation.

It is, as it were, a spiritual self-interest that must prompt a Parsee to look to the good education of his children at an early age. Thus, from a religious point of view, education is a great question with the Parsees.

All men have two kinds of wisdom—(1) *Ásnideh kherad*, i.e., natural or innate wisdom, and (2) *Gaocho-sruta kherad*, i.e., acquired wisdom. These wisdoms or intellects enable a man to follow the path of Bahaman, or Good Mind, and to avoid that of Akaman, or Evil Mind. God has gifted man with a certain portion of the first kind. It is in the hand of man to cultivate and develop the second. It is education that does so. So it is the duty of a good Mazdayasnâ, not only to educate his own children, but to help in the cause of general education. Of the three kinds of charity especially recommended in the Vendidad, that of helping the cause of education is one. Several rich Parsees have, with this view, which is recommended in their sacred books, bequeathed large sums of money to found charitable institutions for educating the poor.

The proper age recommended by religious Parsee books for ordinary education is seven. Before that age, children should have home education with their parents, especially with the mother. At the age of seven, after a little religious education, a Parsee child is invested with Sudreh and Kusti, i.e., the sacred shirt and thread. This ceremony of investiture corresponds to the confirmation ceremony of the Christians. A Parsee may put on the dress of any nationality

he likes, but under that dress he must always wear the sacred shirt and thread. These are the symbols of his being a Zoroastrian. These symbols are full of meaning and act as perpetual monitors, advising the wearer to lead a life of purity—of physical and spiritual purity. A Parsee is enjoined to remove, and put on again immediately, the sacred thread several times during the day, saying a very short prayer during the process. He has to do so early in the morning on rising from bed, before meals and after ablutions. The putting on of the symbolic thread and the accompanying short prayer remind him to be in a state of repentance for misdeeds if any, and to preserve good thoughts, good words, and good deeds (*Humata, Hukhta, and Hvarshta*), the triad in which the moral philosophy of Zoroaster moved.

✓ It is after this investiture with the sacred shirt and thread that the general education of a child generally begins. The Parsee books speak of the necessity of educating all children, whether male or female. Thus female education claims as much attention among the Parsees as male education.

Physical education is as much spoken of in the Zoroastrian books as mental and moral education. The health of the body is considered as the first requisite for the health of the soul. That the physical education of the ancient Persians, the ancestors of the modern Parsees, was a subject of admiration among the ancient Greeks and Romans is too well known. In all the blessings invoked upon one in the religious prayers, the strength of body occupies the first and the most prominent place.

Analysing the Bombay Census of 1881, Dr. Weir, the Health Officer, said: "Examining education according to faith or class, we find that education is most extended amongst the Parsee people; female education is more diffused amongst the Parsee population than any other class . . . . Contrasting these results with education at an early age amongst Parsees, we find 12·2 per cent Parsee male and 8·84 per cent female children, under six years of age, under instruction; between six and fifteen the number of Parsee male and female children under instruction is much larger than in any other class. Over fifteen years of age, the smallest proportion of illiterate, either male or female is found in the Parsee population."

The religious books of the Parsees say that the education of Zoroastrian youths should teach them perfect discipline. Obedience to their teachers, obedience to their parents, obedience to their elders in society, and obedience to the constitutional forms of Government, should be one of the practical results of their education. So a Zoroastrian child is asked to be affectionate towards, and submissive to, his teachers.

Obedience to parents is a religious virtue with the Zoroastrian religion. Disobedient children are considered great sinners. This virtue of obedience to parents was such a common characteristic with the ancient Zoroastrians that, as Herodotus says, the legitimacy of a child accused of a misdeed towards the parents, was looked at with great

suspicion. The parents were the rulers of the house. The father was the king, and the mother the queen of the house. So the children as subjects were bound to be obedient to their rulers. This obedience to parents at home, and to teachers at school, was a training for obedience to the rules and manners of society at large, and to the constitutional forms for the government of the country. A child disobedient to his parents cannot be expected to be a good member of society and to be a good and loyal subject ; so the religious books of the Parsees greatly emphasize this virtue. One of the blessings that a priest prays for, in a house on performing the Afringân ceremony, is the obedience of the children to the head of the family. He prays: "May obedience overcome disobedience in this house ; may peace overcome dissensions ; may charity overcome want of charity ; may courtesy overcome pride ; may truth overcome falsehood."

We said above that the training for obedience to parents, was a training for obedience to the constitutional forms of government. This brings us to the question of the influence of the Parsee religion upon the government of the country in which they live. Zoroastrianism teaches love and regard, loyalty and obedience, to the regular constitutional forms of government. Where love, order, and harmony reign, there reign, peace and prosperity. A Parsee mother prays for a son that could take an intelligent part in the deliberations of the councils of his community and of his govern-



ment ; so a regard for the regular forms of government was necessary.

We said above that a Parsee's mind is trained, by his religious precepts, to recognise all that is good in Nature, from which it is led to Nature's God. As he always sees order and harmony in nature, he is trained to like order and hate disorder. This love of order and hatred of disorder teach him to always entertain respect for a settled form of government ; so in his usual prayers he prays for his sovereign who is at the head of the government. What Herodotus said of the Persians of his time, is also true of the Parsees of the present day. The great historian said: "He that sacrifices is not permitted to pray for blessings for himself, but is obliged to offer prayers for the prosperity of all the Persians and the king, for he is himself included in the Persians" (Bk. I., ch. 131). At the end of his usual prayers, in the prayer known as "Tandarusti," a Parsee beseeches his Almighty God first to confer his blessings upon his sovereign, then upon his community, and then upon his parents, himself, wife and children. A Parsee's respect for a good government and for a just and kind ruler is as marked as his hatred for anarchy and for an unjust ruler or tyrant. A disregard for all good constitutional forms of government is considered to be a misbehaviour punishable by God. It is this that makes a Parsee loyal to his kind and just British rulers. It is this love for a good constitutional form of a just government, added to their personal regard for their

present sovereign, not only as a good queen, but as a good wife, a good mother, and a good woman, that has endeared the name of Her Majesty the Queen to the hearts of all Parsees. The toast of Her Majesty's health is a regular event in some of their public and private feasts.

As it is one of the most important duties of a good government to look to the sanitation of the country, we will speak here about the Parsee ideas of sanitation and see how far these ideas help the general cause of sanitation. Of all the practical questions, the one most affected by the religious precepts of Zoroastrianism is that of the observation of sanitary rules and principles. Several chapters of the Vendidad, form, as it were, the sanitary code of the Parsees. Most of the injunctions will stand the test of sanitary science for ages together. Of the different Asiatic communities inhabiting Bombay, the Parsees have the lowest death-rate. One can safely say that that is, to a great extent, due to the Zoroastrian ideas of sanitation, segregation, purification, and cleanliness. A Parsee is enjoined not to drink from the same cup or glass from which another man has drunk, lest he catch by contagion, the disease from which the other may be suffering. He is, under no circumstances, to touch the dead body of a person a short time after death, lest he spread the disease, if contagious, of the deceased. If he accidentally or unavoidably does, he has to purify himself by a certain process of washing before he mixes with others in society. A passing fly, or even a blowing wind, is supposed

to spread disease by contagion. So he is enjoined to perform ablutions several times during the day, before saying his prayers, before meals, and after answering the calls of nature. If his hand comes into contact with the saliva of his own mouth or with that of somebody else, he has to wash it. He has to keep aloof from women in accouchement, lest he be the medium of spreading puerperal fever and such other complaints. He has to keep himself aloof from corpse-bearers, lest he spread any disease through them. If accidentally he comes into contact with these people, he has to bathe before mixing in society. A breach of these and various other sanitary rules is, as it were, helping the cause of the Evil Principle.

Again, Zoroastrianism asks its disciples to keep the earth pure, to keep the air pure, and to keep the water pure. It considers the sun as the greatest purifier. In places where the rays of the sun do not enter, fire over which fragrant wood is burnt is the next purifier. It is a great sin to pollute water by decomposing matter. Not only is the commission of a fault of this kind a sin, but also the omission, when one sees such a pollution, of taking proper means to remove it. A Zoroastrian, when he happens to see, while passing in his way, a running stream of drinking water polluted by some decomposing matter such as a corpse, is enjoined to stop and try his best to go into the stream and to remove the putrifying matter, lest its continuation may spoil the

water and affect the health of the people using it. An omission to do this act is a sin from a Zoroastrian point of view. At the bottom of a Parsee's custom of disposing of the dead, and at the bottom of all the strict religious ceremonies enjoined therewith, lies the one main principle, viz., that, preserving all possible respect for the dead, the body, after its separation from the immortal soul, should be disposed of in a way the least harmful and the least injurious to the living.<sup>(1)</sup> The homely proverb that "cleanliness is godliness" is nowhere more recommended than in the Parsee religious books, which teach that the cleanliness of body will lead to and help the cleanliness of mind. As Mr. Samuel Lang says, the identification of moral and physical evil is one of the most essential and peculiar tenets of the Zoroastrian creed. It is a tenet "which is fast becoming a leading idea in modern civilization."

We said above that a Parsee is enjoined to keep the earth pure. As one of the means to do this, cultivation is specially recommended. To bring desolate land into cultivation and thus to add to the prosperity of the inhabitants is a meritorious act, helping the cause of the Good Principle. To help cultivation is as meritorious as helping the cause of holiness and piety (Vend. III., 31), because it helps the poor to gain their honest bread by honest work. Cultivated land is one of the five kinds of land spoken of in the

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(1) For the Parsee custom of the disposal of the dead, *vide* my paper on "The Funeral Ceremonies of the Parsees, their Origin and Explanation."

Vendidâd as feeling happy. These are: *First*, that piece of land where they have built a house of worship where prayers are offered to God and religious ceremonies performed ; *secondly*, that piece of land where good married couples live in happiness with their children ; *thirdly*, that piece of land which is well cultivated, where irrigation is carried on, and where wet or marshy land is turned into dry cultivable piece of ground ; *fourthly*, that piece of land where the breeding of flocks and herds takes place ; *fifthly*, that piece of land which is most frequented by these flocks and herds for the purposes of trade, &c. The mention of these places in the Vendidâd gives an idea of the social and practical life recommended by the religious precepts of the Parsee religion.

Coming to the question of Temperance, taking the word in its general sense, we find that Zoroastrian books advise temperance in all cases. Temperance is spoken of as a priestly virtue (Vend. XIII., 43). It was owing to these teachings of their religion that the ancient Persians were, according to Strabo, Xenophon, and other ancient historians, well known for their temperate habits. Fasting is not prescribed in any case as in other religions.

The old religious books of the Parsees do not strictly prohibit the use of wine, but preach moderation. Adarbâd Mârespand in his Pandnâme advises moderation : " Make a moderate use of wine, because he who makes an immoderate use committeth various sinful acts." Dâdistân-i-dini (Ch. XL., XLI,) allows the use of wine and admonishes

every man to exert moral control over himself. To the robust and intelligent, who can do without wine, it recommends abstinence. To others it recommends moderation. A person, who gives another a drink, is deemed as guilty as a drinker, if the latter does any mischief either to himself or to others through the influence of that drink. Only that man is justified to take wine who can thereby do some good to himself, or at least can do no harm to himself. If his (*humata, hukhta, and hvarshta, i. e.,*) good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, are in the least perverted by drink, he must abstain from it. The book advises a man to determine for himself once for all what moderate quantity he can digest without any harm. Having once determined that quantity, he is never to exceed it. The most that a man should take is three glasses of diluted wine. If he exceed that quantity there is a likelihood of his good thoughts, words, and deeds being perverted. The Dinkard (Bk. 1) considers excessive drinking a sin because it keeps away men from their prayers and duties.

On the subject of the trade of wine-sellers, the Dâdistâp-i-dini says that not only is a man who makes an improper and immoderate use of wine guilty, but also a wine-seller who knowingly sells wine to those who make an improper use of it. It is improper and unlawful for a wine-seller to continue to sell wine, for the sake of his pocket, to a customer who is the worse for liquor. He is to make it a point to sell wine to those only who can do some good to them-

selves by that drink, or at least no harm either to themselves or to others.”<sup>(1)</sup>

We now come to the question of Wealth, Poverty, and Labour. As Herodotus said, a Parsee, before praying for himself, prays for his sovereign and for his community, for he is himself included in the community. His religious precepts teach him to drown his individuality in the common interests of his community. He is to consider himself as a part and parcel of the whole community. The good of the whole will be the good—and that a solid good—of the parts. In the 12th chapter of the Yasna, which contains, as it were, the Zoroastrian articles of faith, a Zoroastrian promises to preserve a perfect brotherhood. He promises, even at the risk of his life, to protect the life and the property of all the members of his community and to help in the cause that would bring about their prosperity and welfare. It is with these good feelings of brotherhood and charity that the Parsee community has endowed large funds for benevolent and charitable purposes. If the rich Parsees of the future generations were to follow in the footsteps of their ancestors of the past and present generations in the matter of giving liberal donations for the good of the deserving poor of their community, one can say that there would be very little cause for the socialists to complain from a poor man's point of view. It is these notions of charity and brotherhood that have urged them

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(1) *Vide* my paper on “Wine among the Ancient Persians.”

to start public funds for the general good of the whole community. Besides other large charity funds that are managed by private trusts, the Trustees of the Panchayet hold in trust a sum of about Rs. 47,43,000 for various purposes of charity and benevolence. Men of all grades in society contribute to these funds on various occasions. The rich contribute on occasions both of joy and grief. On grand occasions like those of weddings in their families they contribute large sums in charity to commemorate those events. Again, on the death of their dear ones, the rich and the poor all pay various sums, according to their means, in charity. These sums are announced on the occasion of the Oothumna or the ceremony on the third day after death. The rich pay large sums on these occasions to commemorate the names of their dear ones. <sup>(1)</sup> In the Vendidad three kinds of charitable deeds are especially mentioned as meritorious—(i) to help the poor ; (ii) to help a man to marry and thus to enable him to lead a virtuous and honourable life ; and (iii) to give education to those who are in search of it. If one were to look to the long list of Parsee charities, headed by that of that prince of Parsee charity, the first Parsee Baronet, he will find these three kinds of charity especially attended to.

The religious training of a Parsee does not restrict his ideas of brotherhood and charity to his own community

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(1) *Vide* my paper on "The Funeral Ceremonies of the Parsees, their Origin and Explanation," before the Anthropological Society of Bombay, vol. II.



alone. He extends his charity to non-Zoroastrians as well. As Dr. Haug says: "Charity is regarded as the highest virtue by the Zoroastrians, which circumstance explains the princely donations made by the Parsees up to the present day for public purposes." Mr. Samuel Lang says on this point: "Another prominent trait of the Parsee character is that of philanthropy and public spirit. In proportion to their numbers and means they raise more money for charitable objects than any other religious sect. And they raise it in a way which does the greatest credit to their tolerance and liberality. . . . The public spirit shown by acts like this is the trait by which the Parsee community is most honorably distinguished, and in respect of which it must be candidly confessed it far surpasses not only other Oriental races, but most European nations, including our own. . . . The instance of Sir Jamshedjee Jeejeebhoy, who attained a European reputation for his noble benevolence, is only one conspicuous instance out of a thousand of this 'public spirit' which has become almost an instinctive element in Parsee society. How far the large and liberal religion may be the cause of the large and liberal practice it is impossible to say. Other influences have doubtless been at work. The Parsees are a commercial people, and commerce is always more liberal with its money than land. They are the descendants of a persecuted race and as a rule it is better to be persecuted than to persecute. Still, after making all allowances, it remains that the tree cannot be bad which bears such fruit; the religion must be a good one which produces good men and women and good deeds."

As it is the duty of the rich to give in charity and help the poor from the wealth God has endowed them with, it is equally the duty of all classes and grades of people to work hard for their bread. The very land, on which a labourer works honestly, blesses him, and that on which he does not work honestly, but wastes his time, curses him. The capitalist, or the rich man, and the labourer, or the poor man, have respective duties towards one another. The prosperity of the world depends upon their mutual aid. It is a great sin for a capitalist to keep back from the labourers their proper wages (Virâf, Chapter 39). It is as great a sin for a man to lead an idle life, as it is for a rich man to fail to help the deserving poor and waste his wealth in the self-enjoyment of vicious pleasures.

For all workers, the Avesta (Yasna, LXII, 5) recommends sleep and a complete cessation from every kind of work for eight hours during the day. The Pahlavi Pand-nâmeh of Bouzorje-Meher recommends eight hours during the day for mental recreation, religious meditation, prayers and study. The rest of the day, i.e., eight hours, are recommended for field labour and such other hard physical work.

We now come to the question of the influence of the Parsee religion on the Literature, Art, Commerce, Government, and Domestic and Social Life of the people.

As to the literature of the Parsees, it has, on the whole, a very healthy tone. The materialism, the agnosticism, the atheism, and the other "isms" of the Western world

have no place in it as yet. Zoroaster, when he preached his religion in ancient Persia, specially asked his hearers not to accept it on mere blind faith, but to criticise it and choose it after deliberation (Yasna, XXX). A part of the old Pahlavi literature of the Parsees also displays something of a critical tone of inquiry. The modern literature of the Parsees on the subject of religious matters is also critical and inquisitive; but, on the whole, it is religious in its tone. Faith in the existence of God, in the immortality of the soul, and in the future reward and punishment pervades the substratum of all thoughts. This faith is not necessarily and always entertained from a Zoroastrian point of view, but from what we should term a general theistic point of view. Again, the literature is very tolerant of other religions. It is never carping at other faiths or forms of belief unless compelled to do so in self-defence. One of the reasons for this is that the Parsees do not proselyte others. Instead of proselytizing, they try to spend their energy in the amelioration of their own race, that has, in spite of all the vicissitudes of fortune, adhered to its old religion faithfully in a foreign land. Their literature, always ready to tolerate freedom of thought, is liberal in its opinions and views. It is always loyal and respectful to the Government of its country and at the same time independent and free in its criticism. It is always ready to stand by the side of its British rulers in all cases of difficulties.

It is commerce that has made the Parsees prosperous up to now. The founders of the great Parsee families, that

have given hundreds of thousands of rupees in charity for the good of their own and other communities of Bombay, had all acquired their wealth by commerce. Honesty in trade is a virtue highly recommended in Parsee books. Dishonesty with partners, fraud in weights and measures, defrauding labourers of their proper wages, acquisition of wealth by unfair means, making of false agreements, and breach of promise—all these are great sins punishable in hell. In some of the practical admonitions given to a bridegroom in the marriage service, he is specially advised not to enter into partnership with an ambitious man.

Coming to the question of the influence of the Parsee religion on the domestic and social life of the Parsees, we find that, according to the teachings of the Parsee books, a husband is the king, and the wife the queen, of the household. On the husband devolves the duty of maintaining his wife and children; on the wife, that of making the home comfortable and cheerful. A clear idea of the domestic life of a Parsee can be got from the nature of the blessings which, according to the spirit of her religious teachings, a Parsee girl prays for. (1) She prays for a good husband; (2) on securing a good and worthy husband, she prays for being able to gain his full love, confidence, and respect; (3) she then prays for having children; (4) on finding herself in the hope of getting a child, she prays for safe delivery; (5) after a safe delivery, she prays for a sufficient quantity of milk at her breast to feed the much-wished-for child. To avoid feeding one's own children at her breast,

unless under exceptional circumstances, and to leave them at the mercy of others is a great sin from a Zoroastrian point of view. A mother suckling her child at her own breast preserves, according to the Parsee books, the purity of her family blood and secures from the child, when grown-up, maternal affection, respect, and gratitude. (6) Lastly, she prays that the much-wished-for child may be one, naturally intelligent, healthy, and strong, one that would be respectable, and that would take an intelligent part in the deliberations of his community, and one that would add to the glory of his family, to the glory of his street, to the glory of his village or city, and to the glory of his country.

The qualifications of a good husband, from a Zoroastrian point of view, are that he must be (1) young and handsome; (2) strong, brave, and healthy; (3) diligent and industrious, so as to maintain his wife and children; (4) truthful, as would prove true to his wife and true to all others with whom he would come in contact; and (5) wise and educated. A wise, intelligent, and educated husband is compared to a fertile piece of land which gives a plentiful crop, whatever kind of seeds are sown in it. The qualifications of a good wife are that she be wise and educated, modest and courteous, obedient and chaste. Obedience to her husband is the first duty of a Zoroastrian wife. It is a great virtue deserving all praise and reward. Disobedience is a great sin punishable after death. According to the Sad-dar, a wife that expressed a desire to her husband three times a

day—in the morning, afternoon, and evening—to be one with him in thoughts, words, and deeds, i.e., to sympathise with him in all his noble aspirations, pursuits and desires, performed as meritorious an act as that of saying her prayers three times a day. She must wish to be of the same view with him in all his noble pursuits and ask him every day “What are your thoughts, so that I may be one with you in thought? What are your words, so that I may be one with you in speech? What are your deeds, so that I may be one with you in action?” A Zoroastrian wife so affectionate and obedient to her husband was held in great respect, not only by the husband and the household, but in society as well. As Dr. West says: though a Zoroastrian wife was asked to be very obedient to her husband, she held a more respectable position in society than that enjoined by any other Oriental religion. As Sir John Malcolm says, the ordinance of Zoroaster secured for Zoroastrian women an equal rank with the male creation. The progress of the ancient Persians in civilization was partly due to this cause. “The great respect in which the female sex was held, was, no doubt, the principal cause of the progress they had made in civilization. These were at once the cause of generous enterprise and its reward.” The advance of the modern Parsees, the descendants of the ancient Persians, in the path of civilization is greatly due to this cause. As Dr. Haug says: “The religious book of the Parsees hold women on a level with men. They are always mentioned as a necessary part of the religious com-

other faiths and take a part in the rejoicings of their holidays. They also sympathise with them in their griefs and afflictions, and in case of sudden calamities, such as fire, floods, &c., they subscribe liberally to alleviate their misery. From a consideration of all kinds of moral and charitable notions inculcated in the Zoroastrian scriptures, Mr. Francis Power Cobbe, in his "Studies, new and old, of ethical and social subjects," says of the founder of the religion: "Should we in a future world be permitted to hold high converse with the great departed, it may chance that in the Bactrian sage, who lived and taught almost before the dawn of history, we may find the spiritual patriarch, to whose lessons we have owed such a portion of our intellectual inheritance that we might hardly conceive what human belief would be now, had Zoroaster never existed."

*Extract from the "Bombay Gazette" of 13th January 1885.*

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MR. JIVANJI JAMSHEDJI MODI, B.A., delivered a lecture yesterday evening (Monday, the 12th January,) at the Town Hall, before a large and influential assembly, mainly consisting of Parsis. The hall was crammed to its utmost capacity, and there was a fair sprinkling of Europeans and Hindoos present. His Excellency the Governor, whose arrival was greeted with long continued cheering, presided; and he was supported on the platform by the Hon. Mr. Melvill and the Hon. Sir Charles Sargeant.

His Excellency the Governor, who was received with cheers, said: It is always proper on such occasions to introduce the lecturer. I think it is hardly necessary to give that introduction here, as the respected gentleman who is to address you in a moment holds an honorable position in the Parsi community. (Hear, hear.) I think therefore it is quite unnecessary that he should be introduced like one who is a stranger and is previously unknown. I should like to say that I myself, and I am sure my Honourable Colleague and the Honourable the Chief Justice and other Europeans present as well, will listen with great interest to a lecture which will make known in a popular form the history and the characteristics of this great community, which is so firmly established amongst us. I do not think that either the Governor or the leaders of society ought to hesitate to give countenance and pay every mark of respect



to a body of their fellow-citizens who have so well earned it as the Parsi community of Bombay. (Loud applause.) Their position is unique—a handful of persons among the teeming millions of India, and yet who not only have preserved their ancient race with the utmost purity, but also their religion absolutely unimpaired by contact with others. They have risen, as a community, and as individuals, to a position of the highest eminence in competition with others. (Applause.) Members of the Parsi community have gained a reputation which is not only local, but world-wide, for their eminence and their benevolence. Long before I came to Bombay, I knew that their name was a household word in England; and since I have been here I have enjoyed the friendship of many members of that body, which I trust long to retain. So, gentlemen, it requires no apology, and little explanation, for our presence here to-night. I can only say that no one will listen with more interest than myself to the lecture which we are about to hear, and in the way of which I will no longer stand. (Loud applause.) . . . .

The lecturer concluded by thanking His Excellency for the kindness and honour done him by presiding on the occasion. (Applause.) He regarded it as an honour to the whole Parsi community, and attributed His Excellency's presence to his desire to know everything that concerned those placed under His Excellency's sway. (Applause.) The lecturer concluded by reading a letter from Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, who regretted his inability to attend the

meeting owing to indisposition. He said it was a matter of gratification to the lecturer, and of congratulation to the entire Parsi community, that His Excellency should have honoured the occasion by his kind presence and thus testified to the great interest he was always ready to evince in the well-being, not only of the Parsis, but of all other communities in general. (Applause.) The lecturer then offered his best thanks to the audience.

The Governor then said : Gentlemen, the learned lecturer has noticed my presence here in terms of too high commendation, because I felt it no more than my duty to be here, when invited so cordially as I was, and also because I have really had great pleasure in coming, as well to show my respect to this community as also to benefit by the most lucid lecture we have heard. (Applause) I am sure it must have struck you all that it is honourable to the professors of this ancient religion that they should make no secret of it, but be glad to explain to their fellow citizens the principles on which they conduct their lives and on which they rest their faith. Of course we must all love our own religion, which we consider to be the best. At the same time I think we cannot without pleasure trace the community of the source from which the principles of all our religions have proceeded, and still more the sentiments which we possess in common. I am sure I may say that, although we may value above all things the principles of our own religion, still we must honour the high principles which have

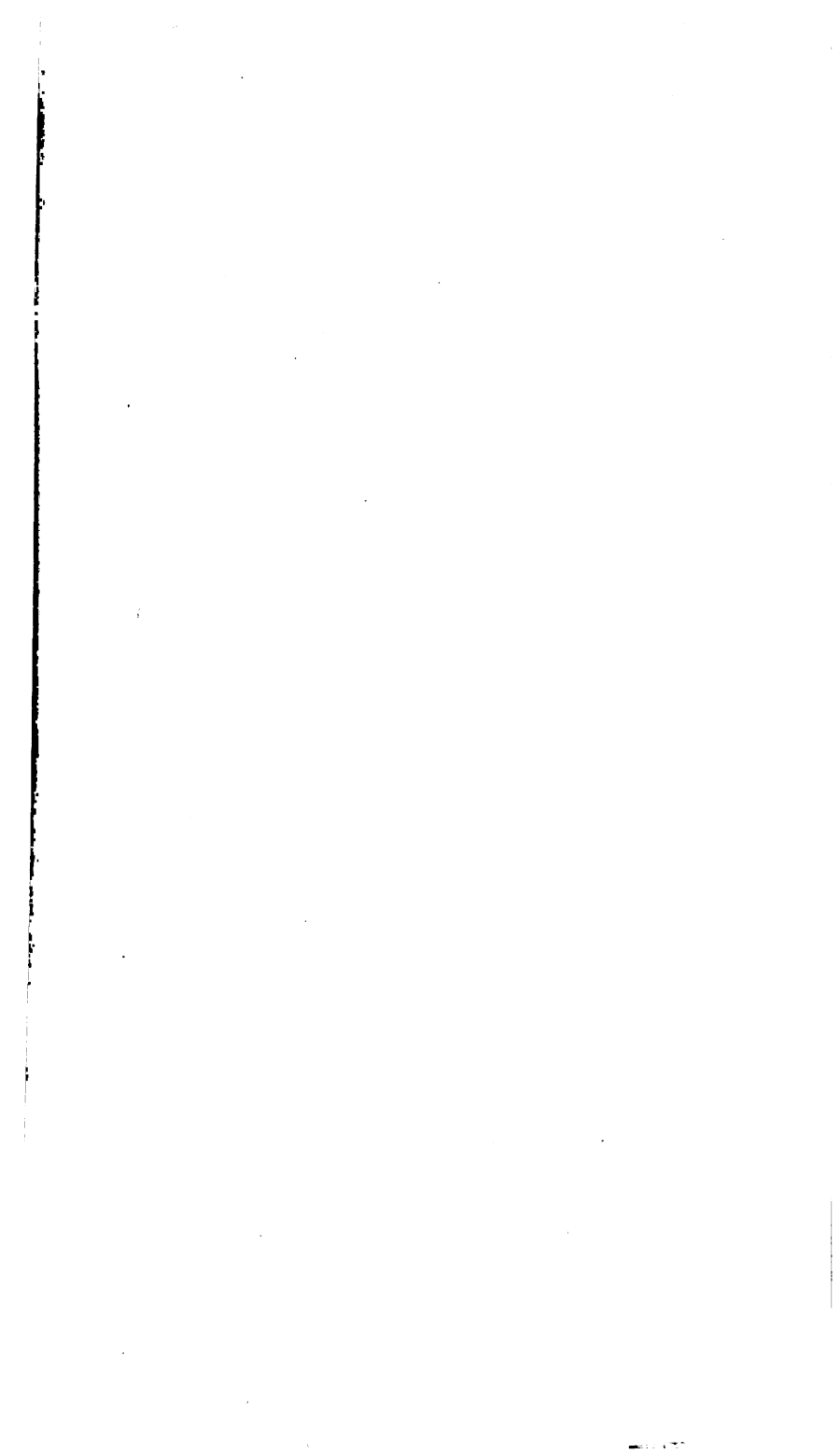
been explained to us as ruling in the Parsi religion, and I think I may go so far as to say this—that we recognise in the actions of the Parsi race their fidelity to those principles. (Hear, hear and applause.) There are, I conceive, in this great assembly representatives of a great many races and faiths, and I have no doubt I have expressed the sentiments which have brought them here, and with which they have heard this lecture. I trust the result of our meeting tonight may tend to cement more closely the ties which bind us together, the respect with which we regard each other, and particularly the respect we feel for this community, which has done so much for our common nation.

His Excellency resumed his seat amidst much cheering.

The assembly then broke up.







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